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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

EUR/NB FOR MIGUEL RODRIGUES AND EUR/FO/FARAH PANDITH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PINR](#) [KISL](#) [KPLS](#) [FI](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#)

SUBJECT: FINLAND: MUSLIM POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Over the last two decades, Finland has experienced significant growth in its Muslim population, albeit based on smaller numbers than other European countries. In the last decade, the growth occurred mainly due to refugee acceptance programs. Analyzing that growth proves challenging as the Government of Finland (GoF) collects limited official data on origin and ethnicity per se - especially once a resident obtains Finnish citizenship. From an estimated population historically quoted around 1,000 in 1990, Post estimates a population at year-end 2007 of around 40,000 based on statistics available for both mother tongue and resident country of origin and birth, with adjustments. That population reportedly has risen rapidly since 2008, at the same time national polls now show a drop in support for immigration. One of the GoF's goals for the second half of its term is to focus more on immigration policy - integration, education and employment. END SUMMARY.

ESTIMATING POPULATION

¶2. (SBU) Estimating the Muslim population proves difficult, as the GoF collects limited ethnic data before a resident gains Finnish citizenship and ceases tracking ethnicity after citizenship. It collects religious-affiliation data, but it appears few Muslims participate in the voluntary registration system. Fewer than 6000 Muslims have registered; GoF officials have told EmbOffs that most of the largest Muslim immigrant group, Somalis, practice but do not register, so that figure is clearly far too low. Examining estimates from various sources indicates a growth in population from a low of 1,000 in 1990 to approximately 40,000 in 2008:

--1990 (Academy of Finland
www.helsinki.fi/teol/uskt/musref/intro.html) 1,000
--1999 (Academy of Finland
www.helsinki.fi/teol/uskt/musref/intro.html) 15,000 to 20,000
--2005 September 12, (Helsingin Sanomat newspaper
www.helsinginsanomat.fi/english) cited 30,000 Muslims in Finland, the largest group comprised of Somalis.
--2007 December 4-5 (OSCE Report) cited 40,000 Muslims living in Finland with most holding citizenship, but did not footnote the citation.

¶3. (SBU) Published population estimates vary and appear mostly drawn from the range contained in the CIA World Factbook, 20,000 to 40,000 (as of July 2005). The cited Factbook estimate broadly tracks with GoF figures based on residents' country of origin by birth and nationality (see paragraph 10), estimating approximately 20,000 by Country of Citizenship and 46,000 by Country of Birth. (NOTE: Such figures are subject to additional uncertainties, e.g., estimates would be subject to adjustment based on percentage of Muslims in countries of birth/origin, and GoF estimates did not include figures from countries with a Muslim population under 2 per cent. Also, the dissolution of

Yugoslavia and the U.S.S.R. creates differences between birth and nationality countries. END NOTE.)

14. (SBU) Aside from country of birth and nationality, the GoF also collects information regarding the mother tongue for those residents who have not yet changed their "official tongue" to Finnish (see paragraph 9). Totaling the (self-selected) languages with a high Islamic bias, spoken in areas with an estimated 70 to 100 percent Muslim population results in 37,475 for 2006 and 39,586 for 2007.

APPROXIMATELY 40,000 MUSLIMS IN FINLAND

15. (SBU) One might accept the broad range of 20,000 to 46,000, or one might seek a single figure. In arriving at a single figure, post believes that a reasonable source is mother tongue data, taking into account factors supporting adjustments up and down. Additions would include the number of Tatars, the native Finnish Muslim minority, which the GoF estimates to be 800. The higher birth rate among immigrant populations might suggest further addition. Counted against that would be an unknown number of non-Muslims fleeing from Islamic states. A reasonable estimate for the Muslim population in Finland is 40,000. Media reported in October and November 2008, that at least 40,000 Muslims reside in Finland; of these, one report said, 27,000 are immigrants, 9,000 to 13,000 are next generation and 1,000 are converts. (NOTE: These two reports did not reflect a source for their figures. END NOTE.)

MUSLIM POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

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16. (U) Based on additional Statistics Finland data on "Citizenship of the population by age and sex 31.12.2006," immigrants to Finland - virtually all of the Muslim population - typically bring a different population age structure than exists among the Finnish populace in general: Most immigrants are working age and the proportion of children and young people with them is larger, explained by families accompanying refugees and family reunification. Finnish officials commented to PolOff that birthrates are initially higher among immigrant families, but the higher birthrate cannot be corroborated by the data, as live births in Finland are not necessarily reported by mother's or father's mother tongue or origin.

MUSLIM POPULATION BOOMLET?

17. (U) Finland may be experiencing a boomlet in its Muslim population due to asylum and refugee activity. Somali and Iraqi refugees comprise a large majority of asylum applicants. In 2008 and likely in 2009 a large number of UNHCR refugees will be Kurdish Iraqis and Palestinians. Media reported that in 2008 a total of 4,000 people applied for asylum in Finland with most of them arriving from Somalia and Iraq; media also reported that the number of applications is expected to climb to 6,000 in 2009. Statistics from the Finnish Migration Service support the reported trend; Iraqi asylum applications grew 284 per cent for 2008 over 2007; and Somali applications grew 165 per cent; Iranian applications grew 82 per cent. In a meeting with PolOff, a Helsinki city official estimated that each of four ferries coming daily from Sweden brings six asylum applicants.

18. (SBU) COMMENT. The fast rise of a youthful, largely male immigrant population during an economic downturn will present a challenge to the government. An additional concern is the drop in public support for immigration, revealed in latest national polls. One of the GoF's goals for the second half of its term is to focus more on immigration policy - integration, education and employment. END COMMENT.

MOTHER TONGUE STATISTICS

¶9. (U) The GoF agency Statistics Finland issued a report, "Population Structure and Vital Statistics by Municipality 2006," which presents the most detailed published population data (October 2007) available for mother tongue statistics.

PASHTO: 317 nationwide with 150 in Southern Finland and 159 in Western Finland
ALBANIAN: 5,415 nationwide with 4,376 of those in Southern Finland.
AMHARIC: 549 nationwide with 433 of those in Southern Finland.
ARABIC: 7,564 nationwide with 5,568 of those in Southern Finland, 1,240 in Western Finland, 474 in Eastern Finland, 265 in Northern Finland and 17 in the Aland Islands.
AZERBAIJANI: 261 nationwide with 165 of those in Southern Finland and 93 in Western Finland.
INDONESIAN: 211 nationwide with 150 of those in Southern Finland.
KURDISH: 5,469 nationwide with 4,237 of those in Southern Finland and 872 in Western Finland, 113 in Eastern Finland, 199 in Northern Finland, and 49 in the Aland Islands.
MALAYALAM: 114 nationwide with 89 in Southern Finland.
PERSIAN: 3,529 nationwide with 1,944 in Southern Finland, 1,096 in Western Finland, 246 in Eastern Finland, 207 in Northern Finland and 36 in Aland Islands.
SOMALI: 8,990 nationwide with 8,505 in Southern Finland, 336 in Western Finland, 73 in Eastern Finland, and 76 in Northern Finland.
TATAR: 138 nationwide with 125 in Southern Finland.
TURKISH: 3,929 nationwide with 2,855 in Southern Finland, 692 in Western Finland, 191 in Eastern Finland and 187 in Northern Finland.
TURKMEN: 164 nationwide with 90 in Southern Finland and 72 in Western Finland.
URDU: 679 nationwide with 546 in Southern Finland and 107 in Western Finland.
CHECHEN: 146 nationwide with 98 in Southern Finland and 36 in Western Finland.

Total of these languages nationwide (2006): 37,475.

Statistics Finland "Statistical Yearbook of Finland 2008" presents the most recent data nationwide (October 2008) regarding year end 2007. Many of the less widely spoken second languages are relegated to "other" in the newer report.

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ALBANIAN: 5791
AMHARIC: 637
ARABIC: 8119
KURDISH: 5893
PASHTO: 364
PERSIAN: 3896
SOMALI: 9810
TURKISH: 4276
URDU: 800

Total of these languages nationwide (2007): 39,586

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN STATISTICS

¶10. (U) Statistics Finland reports (non-Finnish) citizenship or (non-Finnish) country of birth for 2006, as follows included:

Country/Citizenship/Birth
Afghanistan/2011/1738

Albania/104/124
Algeria/252/536
Azerbaijan/121/64
Bangladesh/606/736
Bosnia & Herzegovina/1599/70
Burma (Myamar)/403/287
Cameroon/201/193
Congo/40/--
Congo (DCR)/676/556
Cote d'Ivoire/--/74
Egypt/279/611
Eritrea/73/--
Ethiopia/383/1001
Former Yugoslavia/529/5214
Gambia/177/546
Georgia/51/--
Ghana/447/546
India/1990/2479
Indonesia/181/246
Iran/2602/3442
Iraq/3045/4436
Israel/328/624
Jordan/137/197
Kazakhstan/307/307
Kenya/459/578
Kuwait/--/83
Lebanon/100/440
Liberia/77/80
Libya/107/130
Malaysia/188/296
Morocco/702/1366
Nepal/269/309
Nigeria/572/657
Pakistan/540/770
Philippines/671/1129
Rwanda/74/76
Saudi Arabia/--/223
Senegal/58/78
Serbia/45/--
Serbia & Montenegro/3340/813
Sierra Leone/53/72
Singapore/48/99
Somalia/4623/5261
Sri Lanka/298/470
Sudan/976/764
Syria/140/304
Tanzania/207/303
Thailand/2994/4074
Tunisia/255/411
Turkey/2886/3708
Uganda/58/68
Uzbekistan/99/--
Zambia/76/105

11. Contact at Post for further information on the data:
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